

THE CAPTURE OF *EMUS HIRTUS* (LINN.)
(COL.: STAPHYLINIDAE) IN WEST
GLOUCESTERSHIRE (VICE COUNTY 34)

By N. W. LEAR*

On the 9th June 1984 I captured a large and rather distinctive looking Staphylinid beetle at Midger Wood, Near Hawkesbury Upton, Avon (ST 795 893). It measured some 26 mm. in length and had a long golden pubescence covering its head, pronotum and its four posterior abdominal segments. Not being a coleopterist the specimen remained, unidentified with me for some time although a tentative identification was however made by consulting the plates of "*A Field Guide To The Insects of Britain and Northern Europe*". The most convincing match being that of *Emus hirtus*. Reference was then made to the relevant sections of Joy (1932) which seemed to confirm the identification. Not being satisfied with my own identification I was able to pass the specimen on Mr. D. B. Atty who kindly confirmed it.

This species is very much associated with fresh cow and horse dung but has also been found on carrion, decaying fungi, and at sap exuding from tree stumps. All of these conditions could probably be found in the area of capture, the actual site of capture being a wooded bridleway along which it was running. Both adults and larvae prey on other insects in particular dipterous larvae.

Since this is such a rare British species and this would appear to be the first capture since the 1950's, it may be of interest to describe its past distribution. Nineteenth century records are quite widespread but are confined to the southern counties. These include; New Forest (Hampshire); Parley Heath (Dorset); Beachamwell (Norfolk); Guildford and Coombe Wood (Surrey); Redruth (Cornwall); Southend (Essex); Darland Hill, Sheerness, Sittingbourne (Kent); and Devonshire. Twentieth century records are far more localised, all being from the same small areas of Kent and Essex straddling the Thames Estuary. Kentish records are for the Sheerness District (Isle of Sheppy), Gillingham, Port Victoria and the Isle of Grain. These records, intermittently cover the years from 1909 to 1939, the most recent Kentish record being for Home Farm, Isle of Grain June 1939 (Masse). In Essex the species was collected on Canvey Island in August 1949 (Weal) and at Benfleet in the 1950's (Watts). The record included in the Coleoptera of Gloucestershire was a misidentification of *Creophilus maxillosus* Linn. Most of these records have been from the April to November period.

This Avon record is therefore way out of its previously known range so the accidental occurrence of this species here cannot be

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discounted. The site is some 20 miles from Bristol and Avonmouth docks — one possibility for its origin. However, this may represent a native population although no further specimens have been encountered.

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References

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A FEW REMARKS ON *ATHOUS SUBFUSCUS* MÜLL. (COL.: ELATERIDAE) IN SURREY. — Mr. D. A. Prance's capture of a specimen of this beetle at Leith Hill (*antea*: 90), along with the two others in Surrey he mentions, is indeed of great interest. He refers to the difficulty of accounting for the sudden appearance of a purely North Scottish species in the county, otherwise than by introduction with plants, and adduces the case of *Nudobius lentus* Grav. as a possible parallel.

There are a number of instances of the latter kind; in fact they have been occurring at irregular intervals from about the beginning of the century right up to the last year or two, the earliest clear one being that of the Cerambycid *Asemum striatum* L. It is hard to form any wholly satisfactory theory to cover all such cases, but a natural spread from north to south has never been established in any of them, and indeed the facts run counter to such a notion.

The present one, however, differs from all these in that the species has never been found on the Scottish mainland, but only on the almost treeless islands of Orkney and Shetland — the extreme north of the Britannic area. Yet on the Continent *A. subfuscus* is a widespread and common woodland insect, not specially boreal. It is thus one of the major zoogeographical problems in the British fauna. In this case natural spread to southern England may surely be ruled out at once; nor can the species well have been there from early times, yet never seen until now. There remains only immigration from abroad and chance introduction, of which the second seems the more likely. — A. A. ALLEN.